



## Vacant Property Frequently Asked Questions

### **What properties have to be registered?**

Vacant unoccupied property for 30 days or more as defined by the District of Columbia's Title 42. Real Property must be registered.

### **What is the purpose of registering vacant property?**

To identify and account for unoccupied property which protects the health, safety and welfare of the general public. Vacant properties can be a cause and source of blight. Registering vacant property persuades the owner to come into compliance, especially when the owner fails to actively maintain, preserve and manage the property to ensure it does not become a nuisance to the community.

### **How does one register a vacant property?**

Registration forms and instructions are available on the District's website at <http://dcra.dc.gov/publication/vacant-property-response-form-fy-2015> or can be secured by contacting the Vacant Property Enforcement Office at (202) 442-8947.

### **What constitutes a “vacant property”?**

Any property that is unoccupied, properly registered, and meets the vacant property conditions will be cited and issued a vacant property sticker. Unregistered property may also be considered vacant if the property is unoccupied, NOT registered or subject to an exemption.

### **When must a property owner register a vacant property?**

When a residential or commercial property has been vacant for more than 30 days, it must be registered. The registration is valid for one year from the date of issuance. The property owner must secure a new registration annually if the property remains vacant.

### **How much does it cost to register a vacant property?**

The annual registration fee is \$250.00. Fees are paid at the time of registration.

### **Who must register a vacant/abandoned property?**

The owner or agent of the vacant property has the duty to register each vacant property.

**What are the penalties for not registering a vacant property?**

Any person who violates any provision of the municipal regulation will be fined not less than \$1,000.00 and not more than \$2,000.00 for each offense.

**What if my property becomes legally occupied?**

A property may be removed from the registration list by providing proof of sale or written notice, and proof of occupancy to DCRA. The registration fee is neither pro-rated nor refundable.

**When can a vacant property sticker be removed?**

Once a property has been deemed occupied by DCRA, all stickers can be removed.

**Are there program exemptions?**

There are exemptions, including:

1. A property under active permitted construction or undergoing active rehabilitation, renovation or repair that seeks to restore the property to permitted condition.
2. A property being actively marketed for rent or sale, for less than (1) year if residential and for less than (2) years if commercial.
3. A property that is the subject of probate proceedings or the title is the subject of litigation.
4. A property may qualify as temporarily exempt if it is the subject of a pending application for development that requires approval of the Board of Zoning Adjustment, Zoning Commission, Commission on Fine Arts, Historic Preservation Review Board, Mayor's Agent for Historic Preservation, or National Capital Planning Commission.
5. Substantial Undue Economic Hardship  
With respect to determining Economic hardship, some factors that DCRA may consider, but not limited to, include:
  - (1) the age and employment status of the applicant at the time of application;
  - (2) the number, age, and health of the applicant's dependents;
  - (3) the health condition of the applicant, the applicant's child, spouse, or parent that relate to the causation for Economic Hardship;
  - (4) any medical situations that have affected the life of the applicant or others in the family that relate to the causation for Economic Hardship;
  - (5) occupancy in the property and/or the length of residency and ownership of the property within the District of Columbia;
  - (6) cost of living in the area the applicant resides;

(7) the financial impact caused by the applicant's claim of Economic Hardship;

(8) the impact of a disruption of educational opportunities;

(9) the education of the applicant may sometimes be considered as well; and

(10) any extraordinary circumstances, e.g., natural disaster, etc.

This list is not all-inclusive and is merely representative of the types of factors the agency might consider. Other factors may be considered in making an economic hardship determination.

Note: If a property has received an exemption, an exemption sticker will be provided.

**How long does it take for a property's tax class to be updated once an exemption is approved?**

DCRA provides updates to the Office of Tax and Revenue (OTR) twice a week. OTR may be contacted for further information at <http://otr.cfo.dc.gov/>.

**How often do I have to register my property as vacant?**

Annually, beginning October 1<sup>st</sup>, each vacant property must be registered.

**How long is the Abatement process?**

DCRA's abatement process begins by scheduling an initial inspection and the posting of a notice of violation on the property. The property owner is provided 7 days to abate. The property will be re-inspected 10 business days after the abatement period expires. If the property has not been abated by the owner, DCRA will attempt to locate the property owner and issue a Notice of Infraction fine. DCRA's Abatement team (the "A" Team) will schedule the property for abatement. Abatement typically occurs within the next 15 business days. If DCRA abates the property, a lien will be placed on the property for the cost of the abatement.

**Does DCRA handle rodent issues?**

No. The DC Department of Health handles rodent issues (see <http://doh.dc.gov/>).

**Does DCRA handle fallen tree issues?**

No. Fallen trees are the responsibility of the property owner affected or if public property, the DC Department of Transportation should be contacted (see <http://ddot.dc.gov/>).

**Does DCRA handle squatters on vacant property?**

No. DCRA does not have the authority to handle squatter matters. Residents

should report squatters to the DC Metropolitan Police Department (see <http://mpdc.dc.gov/>).

**Is DCRA responsible for vacant lots?**

DCRA is responsible for ensuring that vacant lots on private property meet the same requirements as Nuisance Properties. The DC Department of Public Works is responsible for enforcement of vacant lots on public property (see <http://dpw.dc.gov/>).

**Is the District's list of registered vacant properties public information?**

Yes. The District regularly publishes a list of registered vacant properties which is intended to be as accurate as possible, however the status of a vacant property listed on the District's published list should not be used as a substitute for actual verification. Published information is as of the date of the last publication.

**Does DCRA sell vacant properties?**

No. DCRA does not sell vacant property.

**How can I report a vacant property?**

You can call (202) 442-8947. When reporting a vacant property, please provide as much information as possible, such as when it became vacant, why it became vacant, contact information for owners, whether someone is illegally using the structure or has openings that facilitate illegal access, the general condition of the property, and anything else that you feel will help address the problems associated with the property.

**How may I obtain further information if I have any questions?**

You may obtain further information from the DC Department of Consumer & Regulatory Affairs, located at 1100 4<sup>th</sup> St., SW, Washington DC 20024. We are available from 8:15am to 4:45pm to assist you with your questions. You can also call us at (202) 442-8947.